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# Behemoth & LEVIATHAN (PART II)

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# Behemoth and Leviathan: Figurative or Literal? (Part II)

Dave Miller, Ph.D.

Article In Brief...



**Most Bible commentators contend that Behemoth and Leviathan, depicted in the book of Job, were either the hippopotamus and crocodile, or they are merely poetic, mythological devices that God used to make His point to Job. However, the contextual and linguistic data demonstrate that these two creatures were actual, historical, dinosaur-like animals.**

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Part I of this two-part series appeared in the May issue. Part II follows below and continues, without introductory comments, where the first article ended.]

## LEVIATHAN'S ANATOMY

**G**OD next directs Job's attention to the apex of the animal kingdom. Concerning the fifth day of Creation, Moses informs us:

Then God said, "Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens." So God created **great sea creatures** [*ba-ta-ni-neem bahg-doh-leem*] and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill

the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." So the evening and the morning were the fifth day (Genesis 1:20-23).

Several translations render the bold-faced words "great sea-monsters,"<sup>1</sup> while the *Young's Literal Translation* has "great monsters," the English Standard Version has "great sea creatures,"<sup>2</sup> and the New International Version has "great creatures of the sea." So we should not be surprised when we come to the ancient book of Job and read of an incredible sea creature—Leviathan (*liv-yah-thahn*)—that truly merits the labels "great" and "monster."<sup>3</sup>

Examine the following outline that clarifies the structure of the chapter:

- Vss. 1-10a—Leviathan's **invincibility**
- Vss. 10b-11—God's **preeminence**
- Vss. 12-24—Leviathan's **anatomy**

- Vss. 25-32—Leviathan's **impact**
- Vss. 33-34—Leviathan's **standing**

God devotes a lengthy section (34 verses in English) to this animal. In rapid fire succession, He first pummels Job with 14 rhetorical questions.<sup>4</sup> The answer to each question is a resounding "No!" The questions spotlight the undeniable fact that Leviathan is so formidable and ferocious that humans have no hope of subduing him: "Indeed, any hope of overcoming him is false; Shall one not be overwhelmed at the sight of him?" (vs. 9). Consequently, the conclusion to be drawn is "Who then is able to stand against Me? Who has preceded Me, that I should pay him? Everything under heaven is Mine" (vs. 11). To suggest that Leviathan is an imaginary creature, or merely a crocodile, is to completely undermine and undercut God's argumentation.

Following the 14 questions, God proceeds to describe Leviathan's anatomy. His outer coat, consisting of rows of scales so tight that no air can come between them, is impenetrable. His teeth are "terrible" (NKJV), "fearsome" (NIV), and "around them is terror" (NASB/RSV). While many animals have large, sharp teeth, Leviathan's teeth surpass them all.

Four verses are then devoted to Leviathan's ability to produce fire from his mouth and nostrils (vss. 18-21). Note the bolded words:

His **sneezings** ("snorting"—NIV) flash forth **light**, and his eyes are **like** the eyelids of the **morning**. Out of his mouth go **burning lights**; **sparks of fire** shoot out. **Smoke** goes out of his nostrils, **as** from a **boiling pot** and **burning rushes**.

His breath kindles **coals**, and a **flame** goes out of his mouth.

It is self-evident that "light," "burning lights," "sparks of fire," "smoke," "coals," and "flame" are literal, while

“morning,” “boiling pot,” and “burning rushes” are figurative and, accordingly, flagged by “like” and “as.” Similarly, “sneezings,” “eyes,” “mouth,” “nostrils,” and “breath” are unquestionably **literal** features of Leviathan’s anatomy. Yet, commentators go through convoluted contortions in order to dismiss out of hand their obvious literal import. For example, in his *Commentary on Job*, Homer Hailey offers this explanation:

Much of the crocodile’s time was spent on the river bank basking in the sun, **when he sneezed or yawned the spray flashed as light**. His eyes being like the “eyelids of the morning” may be a figure that suggests the Egyptians’ use of the crocodile’s eyes and eyelids as heralds of the dawn because of their redness as they protruded above the water, the rest of the body being submerged beneath the surface.... No doubt these impressions were drawn from **the light reflected in the small bubbles from his mouth**, which were viewed by the poet as “burning torches” and “sparks of fire.”<sup>5</sup>

So God sought to dazzle Job with Leviathan’s ability to blow bubbles? The fact is that **many** aquatic creatures spew bubbles—which is hardly impressive or a characteristic to be extolled—even as many amphibious animals release their breath with force when resurfacing. In the seemingly frantic effort to dismiss the clear import of language—apparently due to preconceived ideas or a desire to adopt intellectual sophistication—commentators dismiss the obvious and fail to reckon with the contextual flow of the section. Job would hardly have been impressed with the majesty of God and his own inadequacy due to a creature’s ability to blow bubbles or exhale air violently.

But is there precedence in nature for the production of light and chemicals in animals? Bioluminescence,



The upper millstone poised on the firmly fixed lower millstone

fluorescence, phosphorescence, triboluminescence, and chemiluminescence entail the production and emission of light via chemical reactions by a living organism. This prolific phenomenon occurs all over the world—**especially in the ocean** which constitutes more than 99% of the living space on the planet. Marine biologist and bioluminescence specialist Edith Widder says: “Some 80 to 90 percent of under-sea creatures make light—and **we know very little about how or why.**”<sup>6</sup> If a deep sea copepod can drop depth charges that produce time-released flashes, if a Platytroctidae (tubeshoulder fish) can eject bioluminescent cells when threatened, if an electric eel can produce

500 volts of static electricity that can kill a grown human being, and if a bombardier beetle can fire a chemical “bomb” that explodes from its body at 212°F, why would it be difficult to believe that Leviathan could breathe smoke and fire?<sup>7</sup>

Leviathan’s heart (“chest”—NIV) is described as being as hard as rock and a “lower millstone.” In antiquity, the “upper” millstone was situated on top of the lower millstone and attached to a log that extended outward. The “lower” millstone was the bottom one that was firmly fixed to the floor. An ox (or other animal, or even a man—Judges 16:21) was then tied to the log and made to walk in a circle around the lower millstone as the upper stone

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A salt water crocodile's underbelly

would grind the grain (cf. Deuteronomy 25:4). Delitzsch noted that “the nether millstone, which...has to bear the weight and friction of the upper, **must be particularly hard.**”<sup>8</sup> Such a comparison indicates that, again, this creature’s body was thick and impermeable. This feature is further underscored by the listing of manmade weapons that have no effect on Leviathan: sword, spear, dart, javelin, iron, bronze, arrow, and sling stones (vss. 26-29). Question: Would these weapons harm or cause a **crocodile** to flee in fear? Yes, they would—but not Leviathan. He “laughs” at them.

What’s more, Leviathan’s “undersides are like sharp potsherds; He spreads pointed marks in the mire” (vs. 30)—“leaving a trail in the mud like a threshing sledge” (NIV). Potsherds are broken pieces of pottery found in archaeological excavations. Hence, the Complete Jewish Bible translates, “His belly is as sharp as fragments of pottery, so he moves across the mud like a threshing-sledge,” and the Orthodox Jewish Bible has, “Sharp shards are his

under parts.” The underside of Leviathan was jagged and spiked. The underside of a crocodile is smooth. Further, the turbulent commotion that this creature causes stands out from all other sea life, even making it appear as if the ocean is churning like a boiling cauldron (vs. 31).

Lest we fail to see the forest for the trees, look at God’s own conclusion that follows from the description of the anatomical and behavioral features and capabilities of Leviathan: “On earth there is nothing like him, which is made without fear. He beholds every high thing; He is king over all the children of pride” (vss. 33-34). Every one of these declarations concerning Leviathan’s preeminent standing affirms his superiority over all other creatures: absolutely fearless, looks down on all other creatures, and excels all other animals in those features that make them proud. Such appellations do not fit the crocodile. Commenting on the phrase “sorrow dances before him” (vs. 22), Delitzsch noted: “This creature spreads before it a despondency (despair) which produces terror, and deprives of strength.”<sup>9</sup>

### Other Occurrences of Leviathan

This incredible creature is mentioned in other Bible passages that further reinforce these observations. In fact, the word occurs six times in the Old Testament—twice in Job (3:8; 41:1), twice in the Psalms (74:14; 104:26), and twice in Isaiah 27:1. Do these verses treat Leviathan as a literal, historical creature that lived on the planet? Yes, they do.

#### Job 3:8

The other occurrence of the term in Job is where Job bemoans his painful condition by cursing the day he was born—wishing it had never appeared on the calendar. He states: “May those curse it who curse the

day, those who are ready to arouse Leviathan.” Job was referring to those fellows who claim to be able to place curses on certain days and practice the magical arts to cause Leviathan to come forth from the sea. Are such fellows real? Of course, charlatans and tricksters have existed throughout history. Balaam was one such person mentioned in the Bible. The King of Moab sent a divination fee to him with the request that he curse the Israelites (Numbers 22:6-7). Job was simply saying, “Those people who claim to have the magical powers to curse people and times, let them curse the day I was born.” Of course, as is the case throughout Job’s soliloquy, he admits that the words he uttered out of his misery were rash (6:3), despairing (6:14,26), impatient (21:4) and without understanding (42:3), and that his complaint had been a rebellion against his tormented condition (23:2). So he exaggerated out of intense suffering and made rash and wild statements that he later insisted should not be held against him. But notice that whether Job believed anyone could actually curse a day or rouse a sea creature does not alter the authenticity and historicity of Leviathan. Similarly, someone in our day may claim to perform incantations that would cause it to rain. He would be a fake, but rain is real. Likewise, the magicians/cursers of Job’s day were fakes—but Leviathan was real.

#### Psalms 74:14

The psalmist referred to Leviathan two times. In the first allusion, he addresses God: “You divided the sea by Your strength; You broke the heads of the sea serpents in the waters. You broke the heads of Leviathan in pieces, and gave him as food to the people inhabiting the wilderness.” The psalmist speaks as if both the “sea serpents” and “Leviathan” are historically real.<sup>10</sup>

Are the “sea” and “waters” literal? Are the “people inhabiting the wilderness” real? Indeed, in this same context in which the psalmist extols God’s might and right to destroy His enemies (vs. 11), he notes that God causes streams to open up and rivers to dry up (vs. 15), and He controls day and night, summer and winter (vss. 16-17)—even as He is the only One Who can turn Leviathan into food for people. Contextually, all of these phenomena are **literal** features of the created order. So is Leviathan.

But what about the reference to “heads”? Isn’t that proof that we are not speaking of a literal animal, but some seven-headed, mythological monster? Hebrew scholars note that since the Hebrew term has no plural form, it can be used in a **collective** sense, i.e., to refer to **all** Leviathans.<sup>11</sup> Hence, “heads” is an allusion to each Leviathan’s head or the heads of all Leviathans.<sup>12</sup>

#### Psalm 104:26

The psalmist again refers to Leviathan in another context that is clearly a literal setting:

O LORD, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions—This great and wide sea, in which are innumerable teeming things, living things both small and great. There the ships sail about; there is that Leviathan which You have made to play there. **These** all wait for You, that You may give **them** their food in due season. What You give them they gather in; You open Your hand, they are filled with good. You hide Your face, they are troubled; You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust (vss. 24-29, emp. added).

Observe that Psalm 104 is reminiscent of the same argumentation format that God employs in Job 38-41. He begins with the inanimate realm (vss. 1-9), with

its direct impact on animals and man (vss. 10-23), building to the existence of Leviathan in the sea (vss. 24-26). The other creatures mentioned in the same context are obviously literal: donkeys (vs. 11), birds (vs. 12), cattle (vs. 14), birds/stork (vs. 17), goats/rock badgers (vs. 18), and lions (vs. 21). The “earth,” “sea,” “ships,” “food,” “breath,” and “dust” are also all literal. To what do the terms “these” and “them” refer in verse 27? Who waits for God to give them their food? It is clearly the “innumerable teeming things” that fill the ocean—including Leviathan “which **you have made** to play there.” God did not create a fictitious, imaginary creature. He created a real sea creature that inhabited the ocean along with all the other occupants of the sea, and in His arrangement and orchestration of the created order, God provides them all with their necessary sustenance.

#### Isaiah 27:1

The final two allusions to Leviathan are found in the same verse: “In that day the Lord with His severe sword, great and strong, will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan that twisted serpent;<sup>13</sup> and He will slay the reptile that is in the sea.” Whereas the NKJV and NASB has “fleeing” and “twisted” to describe the movements of Leviathan, the ASV has “swift” and “crooked,” the NIV has “gliding” and “coiling,” and the ESV has “fleeing” and “twisting.” Again, these are references to a literal creature, characterized by its snakelike motions, that is so formidable that it is the Lord Who is in a position to kill it.<sup>14</sup> Isaiah even identifies Leviathan as “the **reptile** that is in the sea.” The Hebrew word translated “reptile” is *tan-neen*—the same one used in Genesis 1:21 to identify the great sea creatures that God created on

day five of Creation week.<sup>15</sup> These, too, were real animals.

#### Sea Serpents

Beyond the occurrence of the term “leviathan,” the Old Testament also uses two additional, closely interrelated terms to refer to oceanic creatures: *tan-neem* and *tan-neen*. The first term generally is translated as “dragon” in the KJV. Newer translations typically use “jackal,” except in Ezekiel 29:3 and 32:2, where the creature’s habitat is obviously aquatic, so “monster” generally is employed.<sup>16</sup> The second term is treated more loosely in the KJV, and variously translated as “whales” (Genesis 1:21; Job 7:12), “serpent,” archaic for “snake” (Exodus 7:9,10), “dragon” (Jeremiah 51:34), and “sea monsters” (Lamentations 4:3). Whereas the term “leviathan” undoubtedly refers to a particular animal species, these two terms (*tan-neem* and *tan-neen*) are generic and nonspecific like *dahg* (“fish”) and *nah-ghahsh* (“snake”). Interestingly, the prophet Amos uses this latter term perhaps to refer to Leviathan:

Though they dig into Sheol, from there my hand shall take them;  
Though they climb up to heaven, from there I will bring them down;  
And though they hide themselves on top of Carmel, from there I will search and take them;  
Though they hide from My sight **at the bottom of the sea**, from there I will command the **serpent** (*nah-ghahsh*—snake), and it shall bite them;  
Though they go into captivity before their enemies, from there I will command the sword, and it shall slay them.  
I will set My eyes on them for harm and not for good (Amos 9:2-4).

The point of this passage is that no matter what efforts are expended by man to evade God’s righteous judgments, the disobedient will not

(cont. on p. 68)



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escape, but will be punished during life on Earth. Like Jonah, who sought to flee from God by traveling in the opposite direction from Nineveh, neither Jonah nor the disobedient could escape God's pursuit. Hence, in Amos, if the disobedient were to escape to Sheol, God would still overtake them. If they were to climb to heaven, He would bring them down. If they were to ascend Mt. Carmel and hide themselves, He would still take them into custody. If they could descend to the bottom of the ocean, God would send in His place "the serpent" which would bite them. And even if they were to be captured by enemies, they would still be unable to escape His wrath.

Observe that the locations identified by parallelism are literal: Sheol, heaven, Carmel, sea, and the enemies' country/captivity. Notice also that the threatened punishments identified by parallelism are likewise literal: "take them" (twice), "bring them down," "bite them," and "slay them." While the text does not specify **the means** by which God would "take," "bring down," or "slay them," it does more specifically indicate the punishment for those who would flee to beneath the sea: they would be attacked and bitten by a sea creature.

Granted, Amos is speaking somewhat hyperbolically in that humans cannot dig down to Sheol, or climb to heaven, or descend to the bottom of the ocean (at that time)—although they could ascend Mt. Carmel and travel to an enemies' country. But the fact that humans could not descend to the bottom of the ocean does not change the fact that **if they could have done so** in their attempt to elude God, there they would have encountered a literal serpent. The serpent is literally "there" (vs. 3) in the sea—just as the sea is literal. If

the disobedient could flee there, God would have this sea creature bite them. C.F. Keil, 19<sup>th</sup> century German Lutheran Old Testament commentator, phrased it well:

[E]ven the deep sea-bottom will not shelter from the vengeance of God. God commands the serpent, or summons the serpent to bite him. *Nachash*, here the water-serpent, called elsewhere *livyathan* or *tannin* (Isa. xxvii. 1), a sea-monster, which was popularly supposed to be extremely dangerous, but which cannot be more exactly defined.<sup>17</sup>

Deane agreed: "**Serpent** (*nachash*, elsewhere called *leviathan* and *tannin*, Isa. xxvii. 1), some kind of sea-monster supposed to be venomous."<sup>18</sup>

Job's remarks, then, are all the more intriguing when, in his reply to Eliphaz, he momentarily addresses himself to God: "Am I a sea, or a sea serpent (*tan-noon*), that You set a guard over me?" (Job 7:12). Observe that Job's words are calculated to show the absurdity of overpowering him via tremendous suffering—as if he was to be compared to the magnitude of the sea itself or the overwhelming power possessed specifically by the sea serpent. Considering other sea creatures, for example, fish, shrimp, dolphins, sharks, and even whales, indicates that the "sea serpent" stands out from all other species of the sea. This creature can even be named alongside the sea itself in referring to **uncontrollable power**. The NASB renders Job's question: "Am I the sea, or **the sea monster**, that You set a guard over me?" The NRSV has: "Am I the Sea, or **the Dragon**, that you set a guard over me?" The NIV words it: "Am I the sea, or **the monster of the deep**, that you put me under guard?" Job is clearly referring to a sea creature that far surpasses its fellow oceanic occupants in ferocity and formidability.

Another relevant occurrence of *tan-noon* is seen in Jeremiah's prophetic utterances in which he compares the king of Babylon to this sea creature: "Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon has devoured me, he has crushed me; he has made me an empty vessel, he has swallowed me up like a **monster** (*tan-noon*); he has filled his stomach with my delicacies, he has spit me out" (51:34). The NIV renders the phrase even more graphically: "Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has devoured us, he has thrown us into confusion, he has made us an empty jar. Like a serpent (*tan-noon*) he has **swallowed us and filled his stomach** with our delicacies, and then has spewed us out" (51:34). Whatever creature is being envisioned, it is particularly known for its ability to swallow its prey.

Still another interesting occurrence of one of the terms is found in Ezekiel where God instructs the prophet to rebuke Pharaoh, making appropriate comparisons:

Behold, I am against you, O Pharaoh king of Egypt, O **great monster** (*tan-neem*) who lies in the midst of his rivers, who has said, "My River is my own; I have made it for myself." But I will put hooks in your jaws, and cause the fish of your rivers to stick to your scales; I will bring you up out of the midst of your rivers, and all the fish in your rivers will stick to your scales. I will leave you in the wilderness, you and all the fish of your rivers; you shall fall on the open field; you shall not be picked up or gathered. I have given you as food to the beasts of the field and to the birds of the heavens (29:3-5). Son of man, take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say to him: "You are like a young lion among the nations, and you are like a **monster** (*tan-neem*) in the seas, bursting forth in your rivers, troubling the waters with your feet, and fouling their rivers." Thus says



the Lord GOD: “I will therefore spread My net over you with a company of many people, and they will draw you up in My net. Then I will leave you on the land; I will cast you out on the open fields, and cause to settle on you all the birds of the heavens. And with you I will fill the beasts of the whole earth. I will lay your flesh on the mountains, and fill the valleys with your carcass” (32:2-5).

In both instances in Ezekiel, this monster is obviously aquatic and, again, reputed for its power and superior influence over its environment. Of course, the precise identity of this creature cannot be ascertained, nor whether it is to be equated with Leviathan. In any case, a sea creature was well known to the ancient world and worthy of being styled a “monster,” indeed, a “great monster.” What creature known to man today could possibly deserve such descriptive labels? “Let them praise the name of the LORD, for He commanded and they were created.... Praise the LORD from the earth, you **great sea creatures** and all the depths” (Psalm 148:5,7).

## CONCLUSION

God dazzled Job with real world wonders from the inanimate realm, followed by equally wondrous real world features of His animal creation, bringing His speech to a spectacular finale by climaxing with two creatures whose literal size, power, and ferocity cinched the point: God’s ways are far above man’s and no one has the right—let alone vantage point of knowledge, power, or wisdom—to question God’s superintendence of the Universe. Behemoth and Leviathan are no more imaginary, “poetic hyperbole,” or “mythopoeic” than is God.<sup>19</sup> Behemoth and Leviathan were real, historical, living creatures.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> ASV, NAB, NASB, RSV, NRSV, NEB.

<sup>2</sup> Also the CJB and OJB.

<sup>3</sup> ner, M.E.J. Richardson, & J.J. Stamm (1994–2000), *The Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, electronic ed.), p. 524, and “very large aquatic creature” in William Gesenius (1847), *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979 reprint), p. 433.

<sup>4</sup> (2) Can you snare his tongue with a line which you lower? (3) Can you put a reed through his nose? (4) Can you pierce his jaw with a hook? (5) Will he make many supplications to you? (6) Will he speak softly to you? (7) Will he make a covenant with you? (8) Will you take him as a servant forever? (9) Will you play with him as with a bird? (10) Or will you leash him for your maidens? (11) Will your companions make a banquet of him? (12) Will they apportion him among the merchants? (13) Can you fill his skin with harpoons? (14) Can you fill his head with fishing spears?

<sup>5</sup> Now Mine Eye Seeth Thee: A Commentary on Job (Davenport, IA: Religious Supply), p. 360, emp. added. Albert Barnes suggests that upon sneezing, “fire seems to flash from the eye” (1852), *Notes, Critical, Illustrative, and Practical, on the Book of Job* (New York: George Leavitt), 2:289. Once the literal, straightforward terminology of Scripture is dismissed, one must offer explanations peppered with “seems like,” “appears like,” “probably the meaning is,” “likely,” and “the description is of course to be regarded as figurative.”

<sup>6</sup> Underwater World,” TED Talks, April, [http://www.ted.com/talks/edith\\_widder\\_glowing\\_life\\_in\\_an\\_underwater\\_world](http://www.ted.com/talks/edith_widder_glowing_life_in_an_underwater_world). See also Ferris Jabr (2010), “Gleaning the Gleam: A Deep-Sea Webcam Sheds Light on Bioluminescent Ocean Life,” *Scientific American*, August 5, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/edith-widder-bioluminescence/>.

<sup>7</sup> dinosaurs had large nasal passages at the top of their heads, stimulating several theories to explain their purpose, one of which is a mixing chamber for the emission of chemicals. But “the function of these crests is not widely agreed upon”—Kevin Padian and John Ostrom (2018), “Dinosaur: Classification,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, August 9, <https://www.britannica.com/animal/dinosaur/Classification>.

<sup>8</sup> *Job* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 2:375, emp. added.

<sup>9</sup> the ESV has “terror dances before him,” the NASB has “dismay leaps before him,” and the New Century Version has “People are afraid and run away.”

<sup>10</sup> *tan-neen*] is the same word used in Genesis 1:21 to refer to the occupants of the ocean that God created on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of Creation. These were **literal** sea creatures.

<sup>11</sup> *The Psalms Translated and Explained* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1975 reprint), p. 316; Moses Stuart (1823), *A Hebrew Grammar* (Andover: Codman Press), p. 326; Heinrich Ewald (1879), *Syntax of the*

*Hebrew Language of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), p. 226; S. Lee (1827), *A Grammar of the Hebrew Language* (London: James Duncan), p. 315; Bruce Waltke and M. O’Connor (1990), *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns), p. 122; Gesenius (1847), p. 105; William Gesenius (1898), *Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch (Oxford: Clarendon Press), pp. 416–418; Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles Briggs (1906), *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004 reprint), p. 97; Benjamin Davidson (1848), *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970 reprint), p. 68.

<sup>12</sup> an instance of the Hebrew *pluralis intensivus* (plural of intensity, also called plural of eminence or excellence or majesty) in which the plural expresses an intensification of the idea of the singular. In this instance, the plural “heads” is equivalent to “The Great Head.” See A.B. Davidson (1894), *Hebrew Syntax* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), p. 18; also Aaron Ember (1905), “The *Pluralis Intensivus* in Hebrew,” *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, 21[4]:203, July. The plural “heads” is used in the previous sentence in conjunction with the plural term “serpents.” Using the plural “heads” to refer to a single Leviathan emphasizes the formidable, threatening, intimidating nature of the lone head of Leviathan—similar to how even common snakes (like the Cobra) have heads that surpass their slithering bodies in the way they create concern in the person who encounters it. Not only is the head more imposing than the body, it is the location from whence the snake inflicts its deadly wounds.

<sup>13</sup> *nah-ghahsh*) is the normal Hebrew word for “snake.” However, since Leviathan was a snake-like sea creature, the term could naturally be used to describe its slithering, oscillating motions. See Job 26:13, Isaiah 51:9, and Amos 9:3.

<sup>14</sup> strength, O arm of the LORD! Awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Are **You** not the arm that cut Rahab apart, and **wounded the serpent**? Are You not the One who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; that made the depths of the sea a road for the redeemed to cross over?”

<sup>15</sup> defined the term *tan-neen* in this verse as “a sea monster, a vast fish”—(1847), *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979 reprint), p. 869. Cf. Job 7:12.

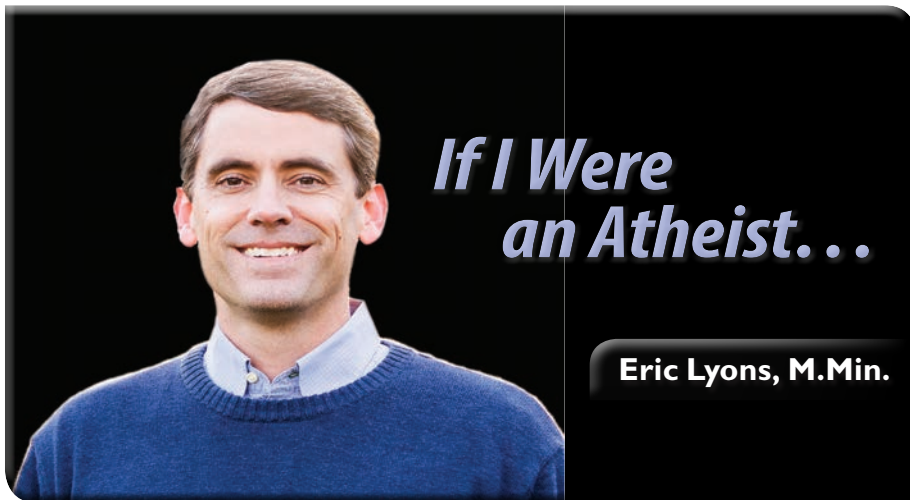
<sup>16</sup> *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, James Orr, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974 reprint), 2:873. Noting the textual variant, Gesenius defines *tan-neem* as “a great serpent, a sea monster”—p. 869, italics in orig.

<sup>17</sup> *The Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 10:325, italics in orig.

<sup>18</sup> *Amos in The Pulpit Commentary*, ed. H.D.M. Spence and Joseph Exell (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 14:176, italics and emp. in orig.

<sup>19</sup> Leviathan—Creatures of Controversy,” *Reason and Revelation*, 21:1–7, January.





**I**F I were an atheist, I would live every moment of my life doing whatever I felt like I needed to do to get the most enjoyment out of this “one life.” I would be led solely by my own personal desires. But I wouldn’t tell anyone that this is what I was really doing, because that might appear selfish, and I wouldn’t want people to actually think I was selfish, unless appearing selfish was beneficial to me somehow.

I would only tell the truth if it benefited me. And I would lie whenever I felt like I needed to in order to get what I wanted, as quickly as I could, with as few repercussions as possible.

If I did ever get caught with the proverbial “hand in the cookie jar” (and I was an atheist), I would justifiably do and say **whatever** I could to get out of trouble. I would lie. I would use false flattery. I would intimidate. I would use physical force. Depending on the occasion, I might even explain that, logically, there is nothing evil or wrong with what I did, because there is no such thing as objective right and wrong, only what someone might subjectively perceive as such. I would explain that just because someone did not want me to “get in the cookie jar” doesn’t mean I couldn’t or shouldn’t. Nor did it mean it would be wrong—only that someone else didn’t want me to do something. But since I wanted to do it, then it was okay for **me**.

In school (as long as I didn’t think I would get caught), I would cheat

as much as I wanted to in order to make the highest grades with the least amount of work. I would flirt and attempt to curry favor with female teachers in hopes of leniency and better grades. I would never help any of my classmates, since I would want to be valedictorian (unless I thought by helping others, I was actually improving my own situation even more somehow—such as by becoming more popular or attracting girls, which might become more important to me than having the highest grades in school). While a teenager, I would fulfill as many of my adolescent desires as possible, as much as possible, in **any way** possible (as long as the potential repercussions were worth it).

If I were an atheist, my sole motivation for working would be to get rich—to make the most amount of money, with the least amount of work, and to spend the money on the maximum amount of pleasure for myself. I would do or say **whatever** I needed to do or say to climb the ladder of success. I would not hesitate to lie and take credit for the work of others if I thought it would help me get what I wanted faster (again, with as few repercussions as possible). I would not make decisions based upon what’s best for others, or even what’s best for the company, but only what is best for me now—and perhaps in the future.

If I were an atheistic politician in a heavily “Christian” district or state, I would claim to be a Christian to get

elected—after all, to atheism “the end justifies the means.” Since there is still a far greater number of theists in the U.S. than atheists, I would not admit to my atheism, except perhaps to other atheists behind closed doors. (If they, too, were taking atheism to its logical conclusion, they would clearly see my rationale for lying to the American people.) I would say whatever people wanted me to say in public and in private in order to get their votes and monetary support. Since most of the media seem more friendly to atheism and non-religion than to real, New Testament Christianity, I would count on the media to help cover-up some of my lies and inconsistencies. And, if and when one or more of my contradictory statements needed to be addressed publicly, I would basically do what I did as an unbelieving, undisciplined child—I would lie, flatter, distract, play the “poor me” card, or whatever it took to not take responsibility for my obvious lies (unless there was ever a moment that “taking responsibility” happened to be the best course of action for myself).

Again, I wouldn’t tell anyone exactly how I really felt about all of these things—not my parents, my boss, my friends, or my girlfriend. (I probably wouldn’t see the advantage of getting married.) I also wouldn’t tell my kids. (Actually, I probably wouldn’t want any kids since they cost too much money and energy, and if my girlfriend ever got pregnant I might encourage her to “abort the little blob of tissue”—again, if I were an atheist.) I wouldn’t tell anyone that I would be willing to lie, cheat, steal, envy, and even kill at any strategic moment, because I would want people to **think** that I was actually an authentic, gracious, courageous, honorable, honest, compassionate, respectable man of integrity.

**I am not suggesting** that all atheists act this way, but I **am** suggesting that if atheism were taken to its logical conclusion, it would **look** this way (and even far worse). And if I were really an atheist, I could see no **logi-**



cal reason not to act in accordance with all of my **own** fleshly desires. To quote Charles Darwin: “A man who has no assured and ever present belief in the existence of a personal God or of a future existence with retribution and reward, **can have for his rule of life**, as far as I can see, **only to follow those impulses and instincts which are the strongest or which seem to him the best ones.**”<sup>1</sup> If I were an atheist, I would merely act like the evolved animal my school textbooks had always told me I was, and that I thought I was—guided by impulses and instincts to have as much good food, sex, money, pleasure, and power as possible (never **really** concerning myself with the needs of others). Life would always be about me, myself, and I. I would do whatever I wanted to do, since, to quote 20<sup>th</sup>-century atheistic philosopher Jean Paul Sartre, “**Everything** is indeed permitted if God does not exist.”<sup>2</sup>

Although renowned atheist Richard Dawkins could never prove that life’s sole purpose is to perpetuate one’s DNA, he is right about one thing: in the world of atheism, “[s]o long as DNA is passed on, **it does not matter who or what gets hurt in the process.** Genes don’t care about suffering, because they don’t care about anything.”<sup>3</sup> He went on to expound upon the atheistic worldview, noting: “This universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but pitiless indifference.”<sup>4</sup> Atheism, taken to its ultimate conclusion, makes for a very, very dark world—full of repugnant vices.

## GENUINE CHRISTIANITY

By the grace of God, I’m not an atheist; I’m a Christian. And though I have failed miserably in my life to live up to the flawless standard of my perfect, loving, and just Creator and Savior, by His grace and mercy I’m determined to follow His holy Word and His righteous example (1 John 1:6-10): to love God with all

my heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love my neighbor as myself (Matthew 22:37-40). I’m **extremely** motivated to be an honest husband, a dedicated dad, a faithful friend, a hard-working employee, and a loving leader because I believe in, and I’m guided by, a power **much higher, brighter, and better than myself.**

I joyfully live a life of submission to Almighty God:

- Because **He created me.**
- Because, as the all-knowing God, **He knows far more than I do**, and thus I should listen to **Him** and not myself.

I seek to live according to God’s purpose for my life:

- Because **He loves me more than anyone else does**; even more than my wife and kids, and my parents. (Why not listen to the One who **knows** me and **loves** me more than anyone else?)
- And if that’s not motivation enough, consider that **eternal life** awaits those who embrace God and the salvation that He provides through Jesus Christ, while **eternal punishment** awaits “those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

It’s true that many Christians continually live hypocritical lives, **illogically** engaging in the **very acts** that Christ condemns (and which the philosophy of atheism, when taken to its logical conclusion, approves). But

such foolish, unacceptable, eternally damning hypocrisy<sup>5</sup> by some so-called Christians doesn’t mean it’s not logical to be **real** Christians. Genuine followers of Jesus have as their deepest and strongest desire in **this life**—to live with the Creator and Savior of the world **in the next life**, and to see as many people as possible (even enemies) **choose** the same rewarding path, by the grace of God.

Who will you choose to serve in this physical life that we have on Earth? **Yourself**, or your **Creator**? How you answer this question will determine where you live forever in the next life (Matthew 7:13-14; cf. Joshua 24:15). [\*For information on what the Bible teaches about how to be saved from sin and become a Christian, please read our free e-book *Receiving the Gift of Salvation* at [apologeticspress.org](http://apologeticspress.org).]

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Charles Darwin (1958), *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin*, ed. Nora Barlow (New York: W.W. Norton), p. 94, emp. added.
- <sup>2</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre (1989), “Existentialism is Humanism,” in *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre*, ed. Walter Kaufman, trans. Philip Mairet (Meridian Publishing), <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/exist/sartre.htm>.
- <sup>3</sup> Richard Dawkins (1995), “God’s Utility Function,” *Scientific American*, 273[5]:80, November.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 85, emp. added.
- <sup>5</sup> Matthew 5:20; Romans 12:9; James 3:17; 1 Peter 2:1.

## SPEAKING SCHEDULES

### Kyle Butt

June 2-7	Oakman, AL	(205) 686-9079
June 12	Hoover, AL	(205) 822-5610
June 16-19	Columbia, TN	(931) 388-7334

### Eric Lyons

June 16	Buena Vista, GA	(229) 649-7717
June 21-23	Panama City Beach, FL	(850) 235-7992
June 26	Hope Hull, AL	(334) 281-6020

### Dave Miller

June 2-5	Highland Home, AL	(334) 294-1878
June 7	Dallas, TX	(214) 328-2747
June 9	Canyon Lake, TX	(830) 899-7077

### Jeff Miller

June 2-6	Oakman, AL	(334) 272-8558
June 7-8	West Plains, MO	(417) 256-3925
June 30	Huntsville, AL	(256) 895-8717





## NOTE FROM *The Editor*



### *Creation Cards for Children*

For many years, Apologetics Press has endeavored to provide apologetics materials for all ages—from infant to adult. On the lower end of that spectrum, we have two sets of Creation Cards that specifically target babies. One is titled “God’s Animal Kingdom” and the other is titled “Exploring God’s Creation.” These Creation Cards were specially designed to help parents who are passionate about training their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” to be able to begin that task at the earliest stages of their child’s development.

Both sets consist of brilliant, full-color pictures on the front, combined with fascinating facts on the back. Their sturdy, resilient structure is designed to endure some serious “exploration.” Each card contains special emphasis on God’s design and creative power. The first set teaches a child about God’s animal kingdom, including fish, foxes, and frogs. The second set presents unique facets of God’s creation, enabling a child to explore such things as the Sun, Moon, stars, sky, water, rain, and grass. We have recently

upgraded the “Exploring God’s Creation” set with brand new images and additional cards.

Parents, grandparents, interested friends, and fellow church members will want to utilize these cards in expanding the minds of little people, instilling in them at an early age the critical reality of God and His creative activity. Please consider acquiring copies and passing them on to families and friends who have children that would benefit from them.

Dave Miller



See Center Spread  
for More Details